

Law Clinic
Annual Review 2018-2019

Empowering through justice

“This year we have seen the success of the Law Clinic grow as it continues to empower our students and, critically, the local citizens they support.”

John Peake, Law Clinic Director



In 2018/2019 the law clinic helped more in the community than ever before taking on 271 cases - an increase of 25% on the previous year.

Empowerment that changes lives

For the past five years the University of Bristol Law Clinic has provided much-needed pro bono legal advice for the local community. Our aim has always been to empower students through the provision of an invaluable experience of law, while helping those impacted by declining legal aid. This year we have expanded our capability to achieve those objectives by increasing the quality, size and reach of our service. By doing so we've laid the foundations for an exciting new era.

This year we welcomed Sumayyah Malna, strengthening the academic team responsible for supporting students in the Clinic. A qualified solicitor, Sumayyah brought with her extensive knowledge of inquest work which led to the set-up of a new inquest service for the Clinic - an invaluable service for bereaved families that helps further bridge the shortfall in government funding (page 8).

Alongside this, the work of an existing member of the academic team, Omar Madhloom, has been essential in helping students deal with the pressures of working with vulnerable clients. His passion for combining the academic and the vocational stages of legal training has seen our Clinical Legal Module evolve to improve the way the students think about, and interact with, clients – further enhancing both their future employability and the service they provide for Clinic clients (page 4).

Omar has also been instrumental in preparing the ground for an exciting new initiative for British x-forces that started with the University signing the Armed Forces Covenant - and will lead to the development of a veteran law clinic service in the new academic year (page 8).

Personally, I have gained great pleasure seeing the hard work of our students bear fruit. This is particularly true in relation to the success of our drop-in model which this year expanded to include provision for the mental health charity, Mind, and the women's support group, Bristol Women's Voice (page 6).

It is testament to the work of our students, our academic team and our partners, that we have seen the Clinic's reputation grow beyond the UK. This year we have welcomed a delegation from Myanmar, who were keen to learn from our model and our experience; laid foundations for a new Student Exchange scheme with the University of Savoie Mont Blanc in France; and seen our students invited to share their knowledge at an international Street Law Conference (page 10).

As we enter a new academic year, we hope that projects such as these will help us to learn from and share information with other clinics around the world, empowering ever more students to help their clients seek the justice they deserve.

John Peake
Law Clinic Director

“This year our drop-in model has seen ever more vulnerable people gain access to justice - and students increased opportunities to experience, and understand, the needs of an increasingly diverse range of clients.”

“Learning how to do things such as producing a bundle and a witness statement have been invaluable for my new role as a family law paralegal.” Isabel Williams, LLB

Developing the skills that matter

Since its foundation the vision of Law Clinic has been to help students gain the very best education by providing a valuable social service. We believe there is no better way to help our students think deeply about the clients and issues they are engaging with - whilst they gain the practical skills that employers, in and out of law, are looking for. This year we moved this vision forward in three important ways.

Enhancing the student experience

The Law Clinic has always taken great care to ensure that students benefit from the practicalities of providing pro bono advice. Yet, working in the Clinic goes way and beyond that of client management. The day to day workings of the Clinic mean students also gain an understanding of what it means to be in a work environment. They experience being part of a committee, play an active role in how cases are divided up, gain insight into back office administrative processes related to the management of cases, client paperwork and much more. This year we've seen an increasing number of students go on to secure roles undertaking paralegal work to build on the skills they've developed at the Clinic, whilst exploring their options for their future career.

Developments to Clinical Legal Studies

Clinical Legal Studies is a third-year option for Bristol law students that helps to bridge the gap between academic study and the practical application of law. It is also a prerequisite for joining the Law Clinic. In the past year we have increased the research focus of the module to help students think more deeply about their relationships with the law and their professional relationships, alongside the practicalities of doing the job. We believe that combining teaching and research excellence provides a challenging and rigorous module that sees our graduates stand out.

Helping students to do more with law

Working in the Law Clinic exposes students to the many career pathways there are available with a law degree - from working in the public sector, for human rights organisations, with charities or specialising in related practice areas. Some also gain a passion for media work as a result of supporting the Clinic publicise its initiatives. Whilst many of our students do go on to secure training contracts or pupillages with international law firms or chambers, we are seeing increasing numbers take an alternative route.

“The possible avenues that the Law Clinic can give you are pretty much endless. Some people want to be solicitors, barristers, to do things unrelated to law entirely or work in the charity sector. During my time at the Clinic I've seen and met students who are interested in doing some or all of those.”

Matt Bennett, MA student

“Taking the Clinic Legal Studies (CLS) module alongside working in the Law Clinic allows students to develop their advocacy, research and analytical skills at a nascent stage of their legal careers. The way the CLS has developed means students are thoroughly prepared and able to provide an opportunity for those who have exhausted their avenues of redress to have legal representation.”

Malavika Ramanand, incoming Student Director



This year we had 608 enquiries with 45% taken on as cases.

Strengthening our foundations

Over the past three years student numbers and cases have grown by 25% per year. For 2018/19, this meant 220 students working on 271 cases. Whilst growth is steady - and matched by investment in the staff needed to support them - we recognise it is important not to move away from the core services that help us best serve the local community. This year, we have put renewed effort into ensuring these services are stronger than ever.

Working with partners

Working with partners has become a core part of our offering – taking our services out into the community to get in front of those that need them most. This year, with a larger student team and increased academic resources to support them, we have been able to:

- **Take on increased referrals from services like the Personal Support Unit (PSU)** at Bristol County Court and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The staff in these organisations provide support rather than legal advice - a gap in provision which we meet. Helping reduce demand on these services means providing help to people who might otherwise do without.
- **Increase the number of hours provided through existing drop-in services**, such as CLIC Sargent and the Bristol Drugs Project – whilst working with students to ensure they are well prepared for the sensitivities of dealing with the related cases.
- **Expand our drop-in model to provide additional opportunities** for students to provide free legal advice with a specialist angle. This year we set up drop-ins with the mental health charity, Bristol Mind, and the women's support group, Bristol Women's Voice, seeing students get in front of some of the community's most vulnerable people to advise them on a range of legal issues from housing, benefits and mental health law – to family and law relating to domestic violence.

“Founding the Clinic’s partnership with Bristol Mind has been a high point. While Mind refers individuals to us for help with legal problems, if we feel any of our other clients need mental health support, there is now a direct route through which they can be referred to Mind. Forming this partnership is something I will always be proud of.”

Bethane Harland, former Student Director of the Law Clinic

Strengthening our summer service

This year we strengthened the availability of our service out of term times - with paid summer internships available for the second year running. Funded through the generosity of our alumni, the paid interns work alongside third year volunteers wanting to experience the Law Clinic as they prepare to move into the workplace. Together, our interns and volunteers have helped us to extend the service we provide and benefit more local citizens for longer throughout the year.

This year we enhanced our outreach work through the provision of a new drop-in centre for The Common, a project from Caring in Bristol that works with young people aged 16-25 who need support with multiple and severe difficulties.

“With the outreach work we are doing at the Clinic, we’re meeting people where they are - and often where they are is in an emotionally vulnerable state. What I’ve learned through this work is how to really connect with people on a human level, and to do that whilst maintaining a professional relationship with them. This has been a major learning curve for me, and one that I know will stand me in good stead in the future.”

Ayushi Angresh, Student Outreach Manager, Law Clinic

Over 70% of clients say our students listen to what they have to say - and always treat them fairly.

Reaching more people

The Law Clinic prides itself on the contribution it makes to the local community. Every year we help vulnerable people gain access to services and advice that others take for granted. This year we have extended our contribution even further by identifying new initiatives that help us meet the needs of a wider range of individuals needing legal support. We look forward to these projects coming to fruition in 2020.

A pledge to support the armed forces

During the year, a project led by Omar Madhloom resulted in the University signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the University to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are welcome here and will be treated fairly. Following the foundations laid this year, the Law Clinic will play a key role in fulfilling the University's commitment to the Covenant by ensuring that members of the armed forces get the same access to legal support as any other citizen through the launch of a new Veterans Law Clinic.

Engaging with local police

This year, the Law Clinic was approached by Avon and Somerset police to discuss student involvement in an exciting new training initiative for their officers. The project would involve students with previous experience of defending clients, cross-examining police officers in a mock court situation. The training will be designed to test officers on their legal knowledge of a range of issues related to their work. The initiative will be launched in 2019/20 with the first session taking place in the October 2019. This project is testament to the success students have had defending their clients in and out of the court (page 12).

Valuable new service for bereaved families

2018/19 saw our latest academic recruit, Sumayyah Malna, work with students to research, develop and launch a new inquest service for the Bristol community. The service offers free legal advice and representation in direct response to cuts to legal aid. The cuts mean that grieving families often cannot afford a solicitor to help them face the emotional ordeal of the inquest system. The inquest service took on its first case this summer and will be formally launched in 2019/20, supported by a team of seven students who will gain invaluable experience in this socially important area of legal practice.

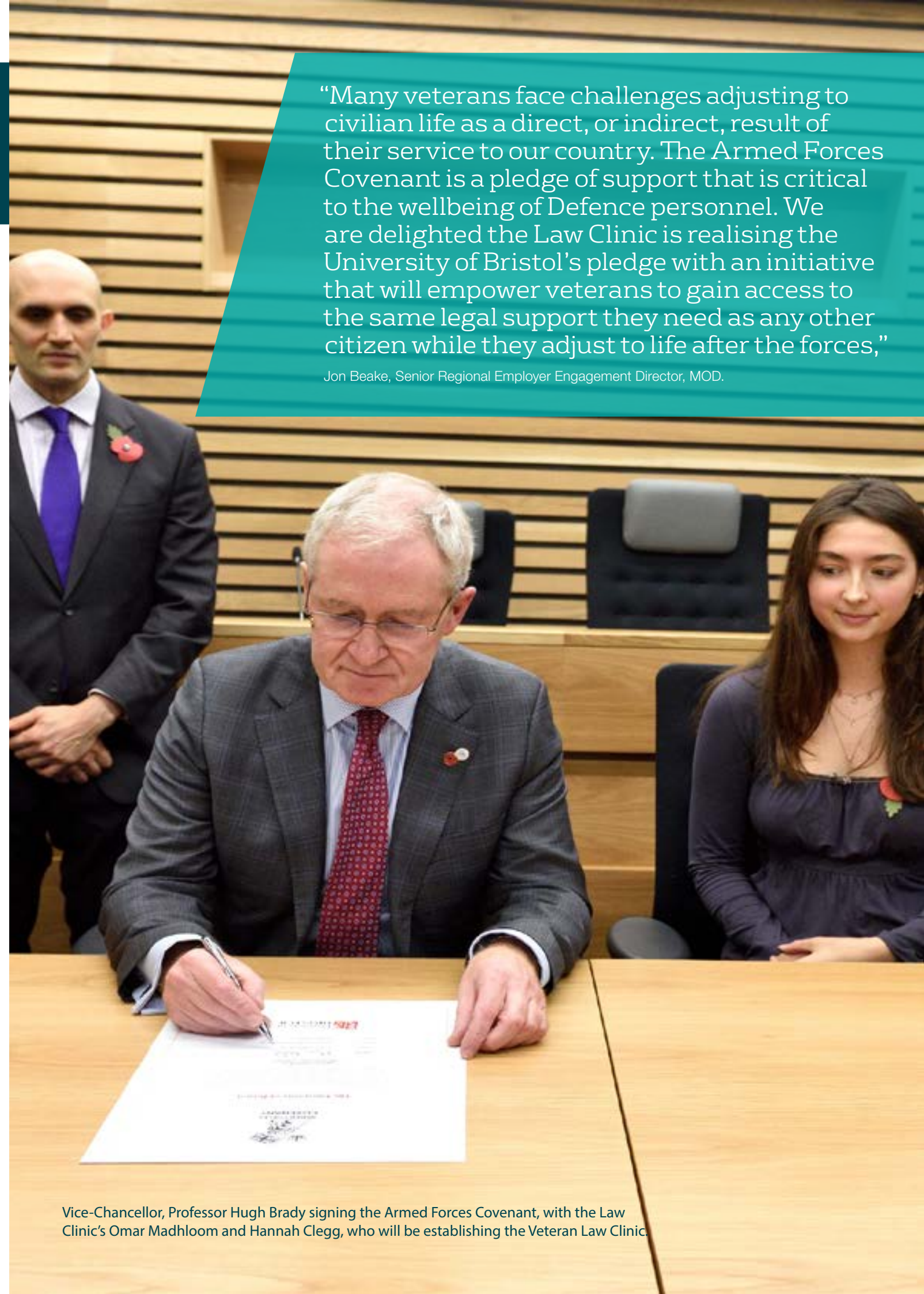
Sumayyah's motivation for the initiative followed her time as a solicitor where she found she was often attending inquests with families who were not legally represented while other parties often had solicitors, barristers, or both.

"Cuts to legal aid mean it is currently harder for families to obtain legal representation for inquests, or the costs of securing legal representation are just too high for the majority. We will plug this gap and provide families with advice and support throughout the inquest process," Sumayyah Malna, Law Clinic

The initial launch of the Inquest Service gained national interest in the summer, with the Times, the Metro and Legal Cheek covering the story. As we go to print, the team will be featured on BBC Points West.

"Many veterans face challenges adjusting to civilian life as a direct, or indirect, result of their service to our country. The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge of support that is critical to the wellbeing of Defence personnel. We are delighted the Law Clinic is realising the University of Bristol's pledge with an initiative that will empower veterans to gain access to the same legal support they need as any other citizen while they adjust to life after the forces,"

Jon Beake, Senior Regional Employer Engagement Director, MOD.



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Hugh Brady signing the Armed Forces Covenant, with the Law Clinic's Omar Madhloom and Hannah Clegg, who will be establishing the Veteran Law Clinic.

2018/19 saw the Law Clinic shortlisted for Best Contribution by a Pro Bono Clinic Award (LawWorks).

Growing recognition

We're delighted to report that 2018/19 was a landmark year in which the Law Clinic gained increased recognition beyond Bristol. This has seen us develop valuable relationships that will help us collaborate with like-minded partners and establish best practice for law clinics around the world. We look forward to developing these relationships further over the coming years for the benefit of law students and communities everywhere.

Inspiring visitors from Myanmar

In March 2018 we welcomed a delegation of lawyers from Myanmar to discuss how legal clinics at universities can support vulnerable communities with access justice. The visit was part of a fact-finding trip to help assist the establishment of legal clinics at universities in Yangon. The Myanmar lawyers sought answers as to how the Law Clinic operates in providing a pro bono service to the community and educating students on running cases and applying the law in practice. In return, the Law Clinic had the opportunity to learn about a legal system where the rule of law has to be consistently fought for at the most basic level. It was a valuable learning experience that highlighted aspects of our legal system that we tend to take for granted.

"The trip was an extraordinary experience for our Myanmar colleagues. Myanmar lawyers have a bravery we can only guess at. They very much appreciated the generosity and openness of their colleagues in Bristol. In different ways we are all working to support the rule of law. This visit may well have contributed to bringing about fundamental change."

Stephen McNamara, former Head of Legal Services and Returning Officer at Bristol City Council

Standing up for Street Law

In September 2019 we were immensely proud that Law Clinic students were invited to contribute to the annual Street Law Conference hosted at Queen Mary University Legal Centre in London. Participating on the student panel, they led discussions about Street Law and shared knowledge with fellow law students and related organisations from across the UK, Ireland and the USA. The trip saw students generate ideas for projects and discuss models of community engagement through Street Law, the logistics of running different Street Law projects and how to evaluate and embed Street Law into ongoing learning.

Meeting a hero

This year the Law Clinic team met with US lawyer and social justice activist Bryan A Stevenson, kick starting conversations about the future role of law clinics in securing justice for those that most need it. Bryan's work has changed the American legal landscape, winning cases for over 125 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row. His work has led to the US Supreme Court putting to an end mandatory prison sentences for life without parole for children 17 years old or younger. We are sure that Bryan's work will inspire a generation of students to continue looking for innovative ways for using justice to empower those otherwise unable to access legal support.

"Street Law is an innovative way of bringing law students, under supervision, into areas of the community to teach people about various areas of the law and about their legal rights. Through our Community Law programme at the Law Clinic, we organise workshops and presentations for local school children to educate them on different areas of the law. We also run a successful 'My Rent, My Rights' session in the Bristol Student Union, which is aimed at students who are privately renting for the first time and want to be aware of their entitlements as a tenant."

Susie Burley, Vice Student Director, Law Clinic

99% of our clients indicated our service met or exceeded their expectations.

Celebrating success

Case successes are often something celebrated behind the scenes with clients – the sensitive nature, and confidentiality of their cases taking priority. This year, following a client survey, many indicated they'd be happy for us to share their stories through the students that represented them. Whilst others, like the disability charity, Wecil, provided their own accounts of the service they received from the Clinic.

Raeesa Rajmohamed

"The appeal we managed for our client went better than we could ever have imagined. The judge cut the interview process short to say our clients case, and our submission, were so strong that she would indeed receive the enhanced rate for both daily living and mobility."

Isabel Hazelton and Victoria James

"We recently won a benefit appeal that resulted in our client being entitled to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). In money terms this means she will now get £109.30 per week against £73.10. The quality of our preparation was cited as being the reason we didn't need to go into the actual hearing with the Tribunal accepting the case on the evidence submitted!"

"A brilliant and valuable service for an organisation like ours that can't afford to pay for solicitors. Without the students' support and expertise, we would be liable for contract fees of £25k for a service that we are not using. I cannot recommend this service highlight enough,"

Alan Johnston on behalf of WECIL, a charity that supports disabled people live independent lives.

Client survey results

Over 60% of those interviewed indicated:

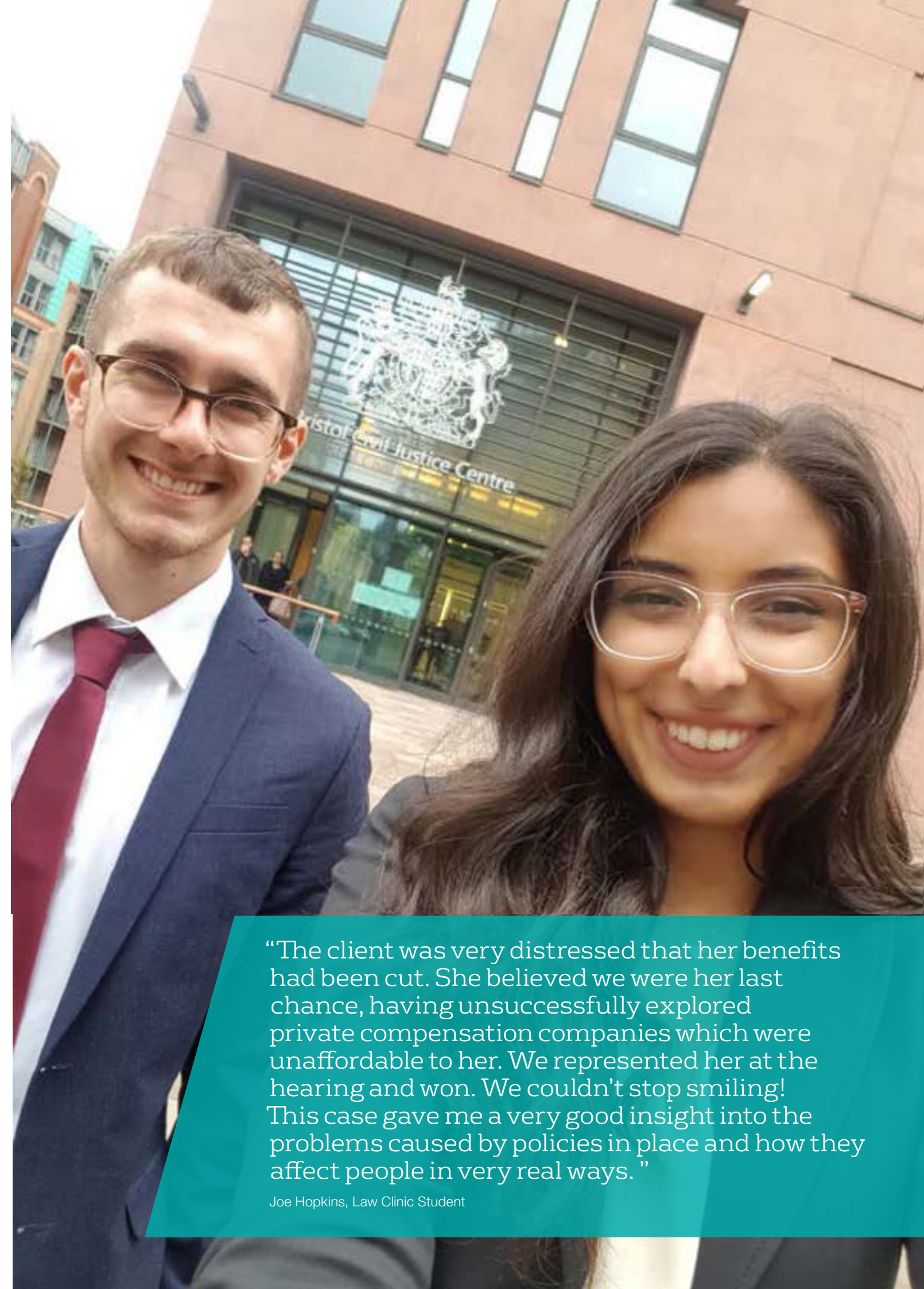
- They were satisfied with the overall level of service received from the Law Clinic (62%)
- The information and advice given was easy to understand (69%)
- They were kept up-to-date with regards to progress (62%)

Over 70% of those interviewed indicated:

- The students listened to what they had to say (72%)
- They were treated fairly at all times (76%)

Over 90% of those interviewed indicated:

- That the outcome of their case was as we had advised or better (99%)
- That they would recommend the Clinic to someone needing legal help of advice (100%)



"The client was very distressed that her benefits had been cut. She believed we were her last chance, having unsuccessfully explored private compensation companies which were unaffordable to her. We represented her at the hearing and won. We couldn't stop smiling! This case gave me a very good insight into the problems caused by policies in place and how they affect people in very real ways. "

Joe Hopkins, Law Clinic Student

“Thank you to all our clients who have invited us to join them on, what can often be, a difficult journey. We learn as much from you as you do from us. You make us better students, humans and participants in the local community. We are proud that the Clinic has been able to help so many amazing individuals on their road to justice,”

Law Clinic Student Committee

Finances and thanks

For the academic year September 2018–September 2019 our expenditure grew by XX% from £XXXX to £XXXX - an increased investment that reflects our commitment supporting those that need it most. We would like to thank the commitment and generosity of our alumni and other sponsors whose support, both in time and in funds, has allowed us to reach more people than ever before.

Thanks to:

- The Clinic Student Committee: It is testimony to the Committee, ably led by Saffron Lim, that the Clinic's continued transformation from a volunteer-led organisation into something more vibrant has been possible.
- The Law School and University, for its ongoing support of the Law Clinic and provision of dedicated pro-bono offices at 8-10 Berkeley Square.
- All our partners, with whom we share a mutual commitment to the local community.
- Osborne Clarke for its ongoing commitment to providing invaluable support to our students, so essential in preparing them for the cases they encounter.
- Our alumni donors for covering the costs of students throughout the summer so we could extend our service and make it year-long, providing valuable support to those people whose cases were still active during this time.
- Our Litigants in Person Service (LiP Service) partners at University of Law and the University of West of England (UWE) Law clinic. This is the first project on which the three law schools have collaborated and one we are very passionate about. For those who find themselves in a position of needing to put forward their own case in court, the LiP Service offers pro bono assistance, with law students providing help with understanding and preparing for legal processes. The LiP Service was the subject of an interview earlier in the year with Law Clinic Director, John Peake for BBC Inside Out.

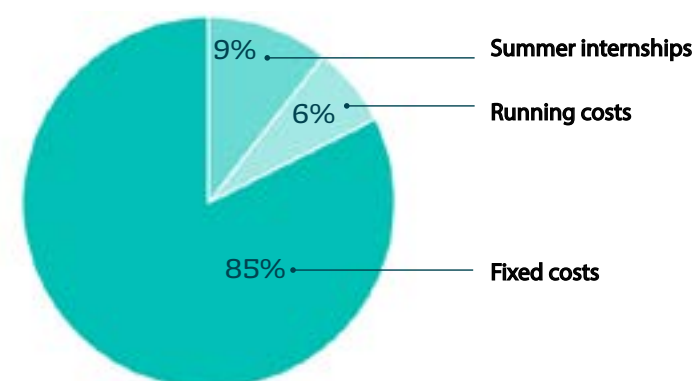
Law Clinic Funding Requirements for 2019/20

To reach more people it is essential that we continue to increase our support of students through a balance of training, mentoring and ongoing academic support. We are therefore looking for funding for the following:

- £10,000: To help establish and develop our Veteran Law Clinic
- £ 5,000: To fund our summer internship scheme
- £ 2,500: To fund a student training initiative
- £ 1,500: To cover running costs for Streetlaw
- £ 650: Sponsorship of Volunteer of the Year award and event

If you are interested in supporting in this way please contact john.peake@bristol.ac.uk.

Finances 2018-19



“Those of us who study law often see it only through the lenses of impersonal case-law and textbooks, but it is very different to see how very specific legal issues affect real people. I have been inspired the most by working closely with my clients. Seeing their gratitude for the work that you have done and being able to see that you have had a positive impact on someone else's life is probably one of the most motivating experiences I have ever had,”

Alicia Ramirez, MA in Law

Find out how you can #DoMoreWithLaw
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